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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: WHY COMMUNISTS AND LIBERALS SHARE THE  
SAME SLOGANS IN MOLDOVA

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please Protect  
Accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Domestic social problems have been the main focus of campaign discussions. The global economic crisis and its impact on the Moldovan economy has proven a largely irrelevant issue on the parties' electoral agenda. Since almost all parties share the same position on foreign policy and the Transnistria issue, Moldova's foreign policy is not likely to change course after the election. Change is promised by all parties and is desired by Moldovan citizens. End summary.

Political Parties Ignore Economic Crisis  
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¶2. (SBU) Opposition parties have centered their 2009 campaigns on two main messages: the need to rid the country of the ruling Party of Communists and a focus on social issues. Understanding that poverty and unemployment are key concerns, all political parties have spoken in favor of an improved standard of living. For the most part, the opposition parties avoided the impact of the global economic crisis on Moldova, instead promising higher social standards for Moldovan citizens in connection with the need to "overcome the communist legacy." Only the Social Democrats (who support small business owners) have proposed a plan for dealing with the economy.

¶3. (SBU) The global economic crisis and its effect on the vulnerable Moldovan economy has not been an issue in this campaign. The PCRM has failed to address deteriorating economic conditions by looking the other way and claiming there is no crisis. Given the serious (and global) nature of the economic crisis, there is little a local Moldovan opposition party could promise to do to fix it.

Transnistrian Issue Overestimated by Observers  
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¶4. (SBU) Transnistrian reintegration has mostly not been an issue in the political campaign. Dumitru Braghis's Social Democratic Party presented its Transnistria settlement plan on March 20. The plan contained a proposal to transfer Transnistria to Russia for 30 years. (Note: Moldovans will likely not accept this radical idea. End note.) The Communists have had little success to report and most opposition

parties (except for the pro-Russian Centrist Union led by former Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev) voted for or supported the 2005 Law on the Basic Principles of Transnistria's Special Legal Status and have nothing better to propose. Furthermore, there is no overwhelming support among the electorate for a Transnistria settlement plan. Surveys show that only three to eight percent of Moldovans are interested in the issue. The seventeenth anniversary on March 2 of the armed conflict between Moldovan and Transnistrian forces over Transnistria's secession went practically unnoticed.

#### No Discord on Foreign Policy

15. (SBU) The competing political parties have not proposed any new or distinct foreign policy initiatives. With 74 percent of Moldovans in favor of accession to the EU, even the pro-Russian Centrist Union was forced to accept European integration as a key priority, though they balanced it by advocating a privileged relationship with Russia and the CIS. Similarly, parties on the right: Liberals, Liberal Democrats and AMN prioritized EU integration but not at the exclusion of developing ties to Russia. Only two parties -- the Liberal Party and the European Action Movement -- support NATO accession. They have hidden this position behind the euphemism "Euro-Atlantic integration" because of the negative connotation that NATO membership carries.

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Moldova's foreign policy is not likely to change course as a result of the elections.

#### Comment

16. (SBU) Little has changed in the electoral discourse of Moldovan political parties since the 1990s. The low standard of living and social issues are priorities for voters. Anti-communism (which has been around since Moldovan independence) has taken on a less ideological bent and now represents the fight for power between the ruling party and the opposition. The need for change is boiling up in society. Even the Communists seem to be aware of this need, as their slogan "Change for the better only with the Communist Party!" sounds somewhat paradoxical for a party that is also campaigning on the platform of stability. Additionally, the Communist slogan is identical to the Liberal Party's motto "Change for the better only with the Liberal Party!"

CHAUDHRY